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This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

In the Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method in an ingress port-adapter (IA) for dynamically evaluating the relative level of occupancy of the individual switching planes of a parallel packet switch, wherein a request is transmitted from said IA to one of said individual switching planes each time a data packet is received in said IA, said data packet being temporarily stored in said IA, and wherein an acknowledgment is returned from said one of said individual switching planes to said IA when said data packet can be processed, said method comprising the steps of:

computing, for each individual switching plane, the number of data packets waiting to be processed and determining the maximum of the numbers from among all the switching planes and the minimum of the numbers from among all the switching planes;

determining the a range as a difference between the maximum and the minimum numbers of data packets waiting to be processed among all individual switching planes; and,

comparing said range of data packets waiting to be processed with at least one predetermined threshold; and

signaling each at least one predetermined threshold exceeded.

2. (original) The method according to claim 1 wherein said computing step is automatically performed by an up/down counter incremented with each said transmitted request and decremented with each said returned acknowledgment.

3. (original) The method according to claim 1 wherein said signaling step further comprises the step of: determining which at least one switching plane is responsible for said at least one predetermined threshold exceeded.

4. (original) The method according to claim 3 wherein said signaling step and said determining

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steps are used for triggering the further step of: adapting load balancing over said switching planes.

5. (currently amended) The method according to claim 4 wherein said adapting step ~~consists in~~ includes reducing a number of data packets to be processed by ~~load balancing over~~ said at least one determined switching plane.

6. (currently amended) The method according to claim 4 wherein said adapting step ~~consists in~~ includes skipping said at least one determined switching plane by said load balancing.

7. (original) The method according to claim 1 wherein said signaling step execution is contingent to a minimum duration of a threshold crossing.

8. (original) The method according to claim 1 wherein said signaling step is used to raise an alert signal depending on which said at least one threshold is exceeded.

9. (original) The method according to claim 1 wherein said predetermined threshold is an absolute number of packets waiting to be processed.

10. (original) The method according to claim 1 wherein said predetermined threshold is a relative number of packets waiting to be processed.

11. (original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the level of occupancy of the switching resources are evaluated beyond said switching planes down to any identifiable physical switching resource and load balancing performed accordingly.

12. (original) The method according to claim 11 wherein said identifiable physical switching

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resource is an individual serial link.

13. (original) An apparatus comprising means adapted for carrying out each step of the method according to claim 1.

14. (currently amended) A ~~computer-like~~ computer- readable recording medium comprising instructions executable by a computer for carrying out each step of the method according to claim 1.

15. (new) The method according to claim 4, wherein said adapting step includes shifting data packets away from said determined switching plane to others of said switching planes.

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